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New Report Shows Seven Coal-fired Power Plants in Florida Discharge Toxic Coal Ash or Wastewater, Highlighting Critical Need for Strong Federal Standards

ST. PETERSBURG, FL -- Today, a coalition of environmental and clean water groups, including the Sierra Club, Earthjustice and Clean Water Action, [released a new report](#) demonstrating the importance of strong U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards that limit toxic water pollution from coal plants for Florida. The report, "Closing the Floodgates: How the Coal Industry Is Poisoning Our Water and How We Can Stop It" reviewed water permits for 386 coal plants across the country, and sought to identify whether states have upheld the Clean Water Act by effectively protecting families from toxic water pollution.

As the analysis relates to Florida:

- At least seven plants discharge heavy metals into the waters of Florida. No plant in Florida has permit limits on all of the toxic metals of concern, such as arsenic, boron, cadmium, mercury, and selenium.
- Rice Creek has become an impaired waterway because of pollution from the Seminole Generating Station in Putnam County. Now, instead of addressing concerns about toxic metals in its discharge, the Seminole Generating Station directly discharges into the St. Johns River.
- Alligator Bayou is impaired by pollution coming from Gulf Power's Lansing Smith coal plant, which dumps mercury and arsenic without limits.
- Florida does not ensure that the permit limits it does have are stringent enough to protect our water.

"This report makes it clear that Florida utilities need a lesson in common sense: dumping poisons into our water without disclosing threatens health, drinking water and recreation opportunities," said Julia Hathaway, Florida Sierra Club Beyond Coal organizer. "Environmental Protection Agency limits on these toxics in our water will prevent children from getting sick and save lives."

Existing guidelines written to limit toxics discharged from coal plants do not cover many of the worst pollutants such as in 2011 when the Big Bend Power Station in Hillsborough County discharged 1206 lbs of selenium into the Big Bend Bayou. These guidelines have not been

updated in 30 years. In April 2013 the Environmental Protection Agency proposed the first ever national standards for toxics dumped into waterways from coal plants.

The Sierra Club's Florida Beyond Coal campaign and Clean Water Action are organizing to support the strongest options for these "effluent limitation guidelines" that will limit the amount of toxic chemicals that are dumped into our waterways. These standards will also require all coal plants to monitor and report the amount of toxics dumped into our water, giving us detailed information for the first time about the types and amounts of dangerous chemicals in our water.

"Limiting the amount of toxics in our water through commonsense standards will strengthen our economy, protect our health, and ensure our water is safe to drink and our fish are safe to eat," said Kathleen Aterno, Florida Director of Clean Water Action.

"There is technology available to keep toxins from coal plants out of our water, and we should simply insist that these corporations use it," added Bradley Marshall, attorney with Earthjustice.

The new report's nationwide findings were similarly shocking:

- Of the 274 coal plants that discharge coal ash and scrubber wastewater into waterways, nearly 70 percent (188) have no limits on the amounts of toxic metals like arsenic, boron, cadmium, mercury, and selenium they are allowed to dump into public waters.
- Of these 274 coal plants, more than one-third (102) have no requirements to monitor or report discharges of toxic metals like arsenic, boron, cadmium, mercury, and selenium to federal authorities.
- A total of 71 coal plants discharge toxic water pollution into waterways that have already been declared as impaired. Of these plants that are dumping toxic metals into impaired waterways, nearly three out of four coal plants (59) had no permit that limited the amount of toxic metals it could dump.
- More than half of the coal plants surveyed (187) are operating with an expired Clean Water Act permit. 53 of these power plants are operating with permits that expired five or more years ago.

The new report also reviewed red-line copies of the EPA's proposed coal plant water pollution standards or "effluent limitation guidelines" obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests, finding that the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) caved to coal industry pressure and took the highly unusual and improper step of writing new weak options into the draft guidelines prepared by the EPA's expert staff.

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